

MOLOCH THE KING

NOTE I

Mass
acres
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Uga
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was
ill.

modes of strengthening the king
and prolonging his life belonged
to
the nutritive rather than to the
vicarious type of sacrifice, from
which it will follow that they were
magical rather than religious in
character.

The same thing may perhaps
be said of the wholesale massacres
which used to be perpetrated
when a king of Uganda was ill.
At
these times the priests informed
the royal patient that persons
marked by a certain physical
peculiarity, such as a cast of the
eye,
a particular gait, or a distinctive
colouring, must be put to death.
Accordingly the king sent out his
catchpoles, who waylaid such
persons in the roads and dragged
them to the royal enclosure,
where
they were kept until the tale of
victims prescribed by the priest
was
complete. Before they were led
away to one of the eight places of
execution⁵ which were regularly
appointed for this purpose in
different
parts of the kingdom, the victims
had to drink medicated beer with
the king out of a special pot, in
order that he might have power
over their ghosts, lest they should
afterwards come back to torment
him. They were killed,
sometimes by being speared to
death,
sometimes by being hacked to
pieces, sometimes by being
burned
alive. Contrary to the usual
custom of the Baganda, the
bodies, or
what remained of the bodies, of
these unfortunates were always
left
unburied on the place of
execution.¹ In what way
precisely the
sick king was supposed to benefit
by these massacres of his subjects
does not appear, but we may
surmise that somehow the
victims

Yet
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wer possible that in Israel also the
 e sacrifices of children
 beli to Moloch were in like manner
 eve intended to prolong the life of the
 d to human king (imleck) either by
 give serving as substitutes for him or
 thei by
 r recruiting his failing energies
 live with their vigorous young life.
 s But it
 for is equally possible, and perhaps
 him more probable, that the sacrifice
 or of the first-born children was
 to only a particular application of
 him the
 . ancient law which devoted to the
 T deity the first-born of every womb,
 hus whether of cattle or of human
 it is beings.²

¹ From information his book. The
 furnished by my Baganda, pp. 331
 friend the Rev. J. sqq*
 Roscoe. Compare ² See The Dying
 God, pp. 166 sqq.